

The “Housing First” Approach to Ending Homelessness

Housing First 101

Presented by

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According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, families with children are the fastest growing homeless population. Experts attribute the increase in the number of homeless families to a combination of the following factors:

- Welfare Reform**
- High rates of Domestic Violence**
- Declining Purchasing Power of Low Wage Jobs**
- Decrease in Availability of Affordable Family Housing**



Emergency shelters and transitional housing are simply “stepping stones.” If at the end of our interventions and our support, the homeless are still homeless – or at risk of another episode of homelessness – then what have we really accomplished?



Homelessness ends when an individual or family is stabilized in permanent, affordable housing, whatever that permanent housing type may be – and whatever the support systems that must be in place to help them stay there.



NAEH 10 Year Plan

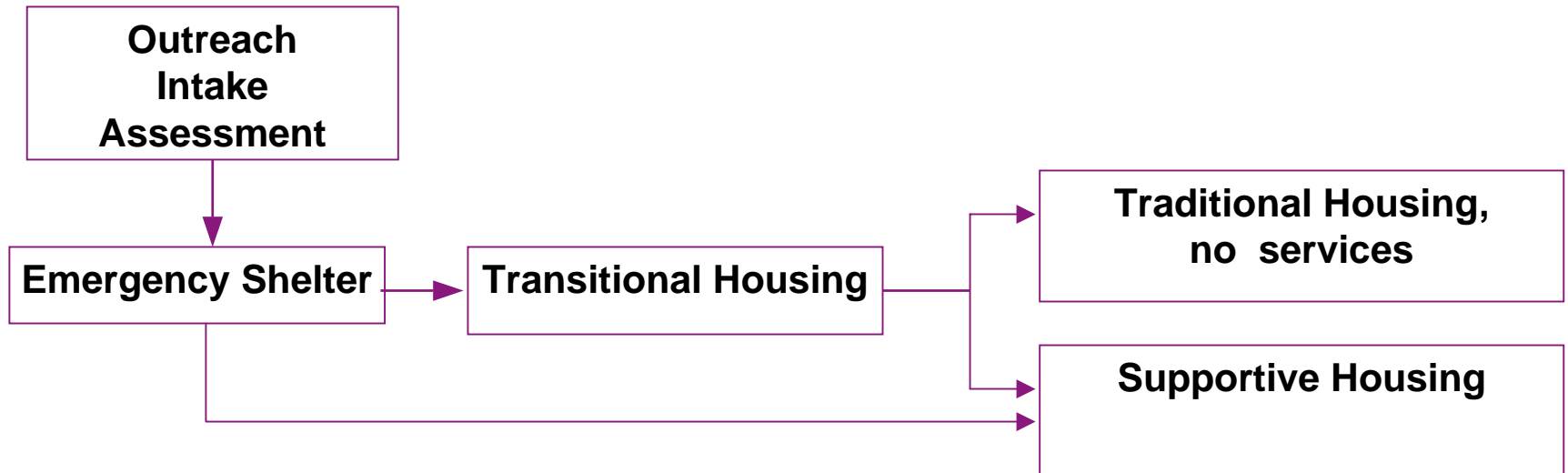


In 2000, The National Alliance to End Homelessness produced a *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness* in the United States.

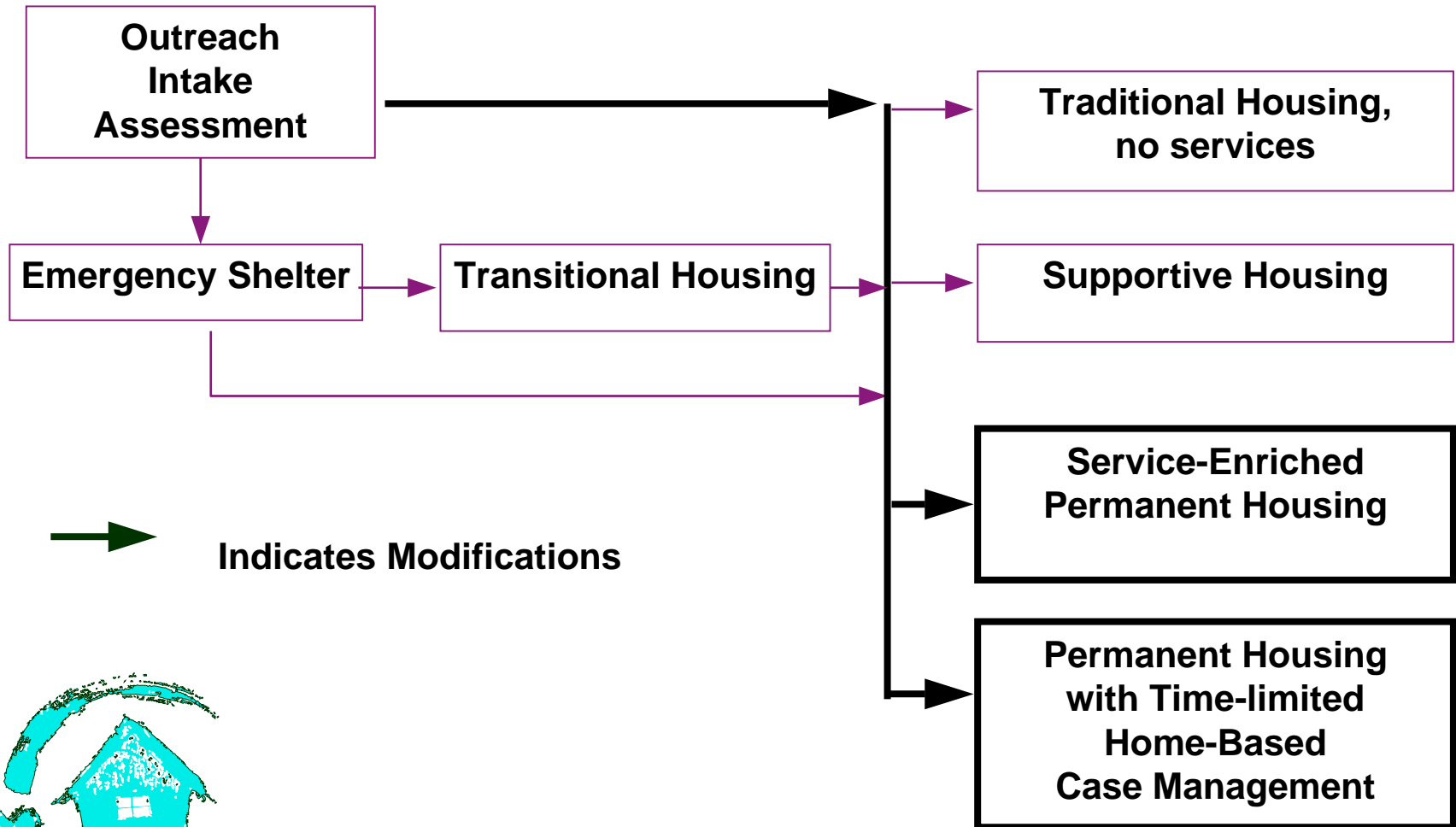
Within that Plan, the “housing first” approach provides the focus of services to homeless families.

The emphasis of the "housing first" methodology is on the immediate return of homeless families to permanent housing in residential neighborhoods.

HUD Continuum of Care Model



Modifications to the Continuum of Care



Additional Housing Options

- **Service-Enriched Housing** – Private or nonprofit rental housing, with crisis intervention and services coordination (& often program activities) available to all residents, regardless of special needs.
- **Permanent Housing** – Home-based case management available through outside sources, either time-limited or long-term



The “Housing First” Approach

Moves homeless persons into permanent rental housing *as quickly as possible*, with the services traditionally provided in *transitional* housing provided after relocation into permanent rental housing. The basic goal of “housing first” is to “*break the cycle*” of homelessness and prevent a recurrence.



The “housing first” approach provides a critical link between the emergency & transitional housing systems and the community-based social service, educational, employment and health care organizations that bring about stability, neighborhood integration and improved health and welfare of families and individuals.



Two Premises of Housing First

- **Permanent housing should be the central goal of our work with people experiencing homelessness.**
- **By providing permanent housing assistance immediately and up-front, we can significantly reduce or eliminate the time people spend in homelessness.**



While acknowledging and addressing the personal factors that contribute to family homelessness, the "Housing First" methodology also directly addresses the economic root causes of the problem: poverty and the lack of affordable housing.



The “housing first” approach helps families and individuals (including those with special needs) to move into permanent housing of many different types, including housing in the private rental market, often with a subsidy – and then offers home-based services (often time-limited and transitional) to help them stabilize and maintain their housing.



Benefits of a Housing First Approach

- **Often Accesses Private Market Housing**
- **Helps to Stabilize and Prevents Recidivism
(a return to homelessness)**
- **Improves Outcomes for Formerly Homeless**
- **Leverages Existing Community Resources**
- **Is Cost Effective**
- **Offers a Wide Variety of Housing Choice**



Components of the “Housing First” Methodology



Components of Housing First

- **Crisis Intervention and Stabilization**
- **Intake and Assessment**
- **Assistance Moving into Permanent Housing**
- **Home-Based Case Management**
(time limited & transitional or long term)



Step 1: Crisis intervention and short-term stabilization.

- **This phase usually includes emergency shelter services and short-term transitional housing geared to special needs, i.e. domestic violence, substance abuse treatment, stabilization.**



Step 2: Screening, intake and needs assessments.

- **The “needs assessment” results in an Action Plan, including short and long-term goals and objectives with concrete action steps.**
- **Can occur immediately or after stabilized in emergency services.**



Step 3: Housing search assistance and relocation to permanent, affordable housing.

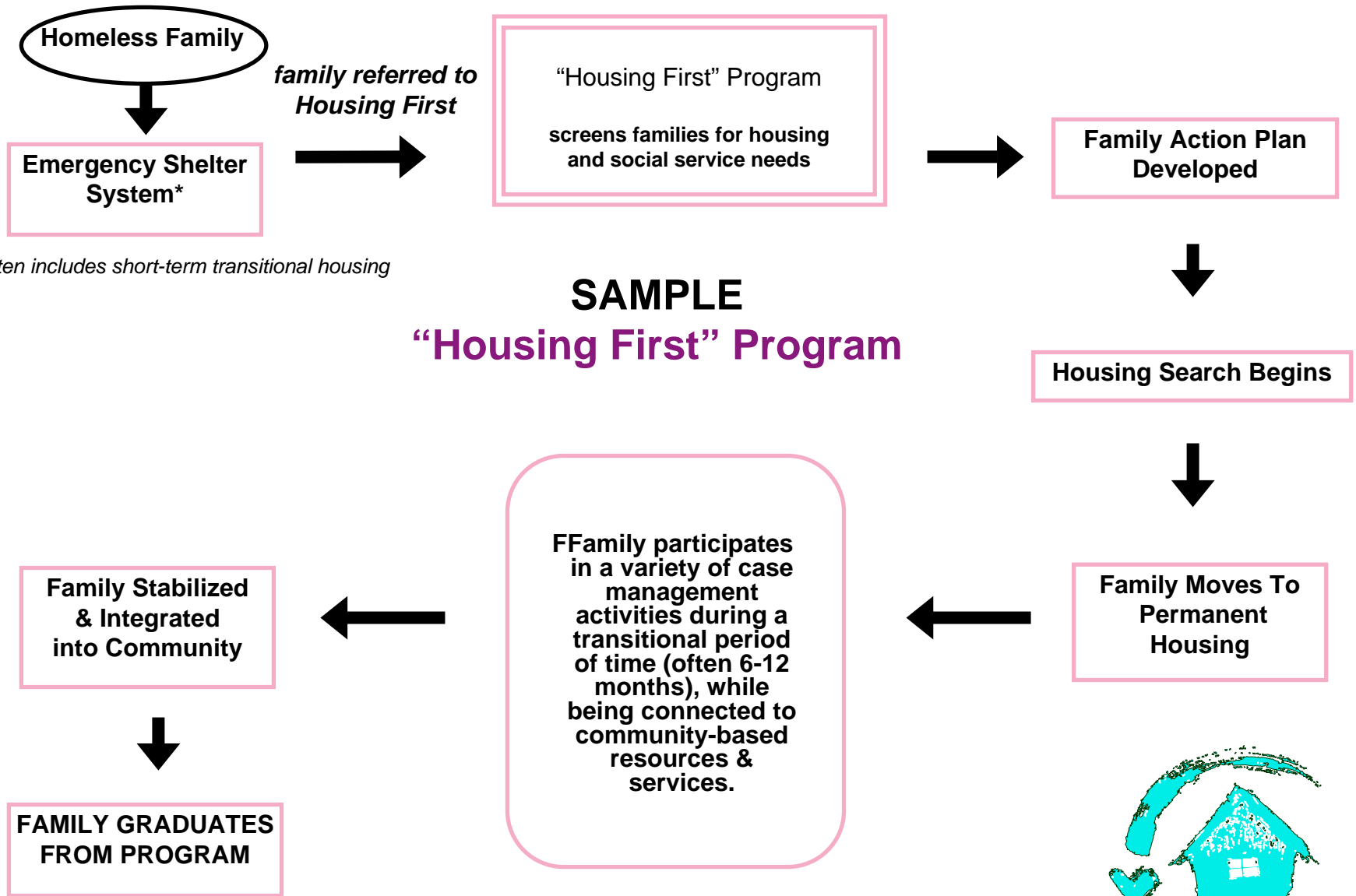
- **Overcoming barriers to accessing affordable housing.**
- **Assistance applying for housing subsidies, move-in funds etc.**
- **Tenant education.**
- **Assistance conducting housing search, presentation to owners, negotiating.**



Step 4: Provision of home-based case management

- **Intensive during the first 90 days.**
- **Intensifies during crises.**
- **Includes connecting people to community resources and services to meet their particular needs.**
- **May include longer-term case management for vulnerable and at-risk families and individuals.**





Assistance Accessing & Moving Into Permanent Housing



Housing Plan

- The objective is to assist the family to obtain decent, affordable permanent housing in which they can stabilize and rebuild their lives. This requires a match between the housing unit and the family's needs. Suitable here means decent housing in an environment which will be conducive to the family's stability in permanent housing.



Barriers To Housing

- **Eviction History**
- **Credit History**
- **Income Source/No Job History**
- **Household Size/Composition**
- **No Rental History**
- **Lack of Move-In Money**
- **Transportation**
- **Credit Check Fees**
- **Non English Speaking**
- **Criminal History**
- **Discrimination**



Systemic Barriers To Housing

- **Vacancy Rate**
- **Rents Too High**
- **Move-In Requirements**
- **Discrimination**
- **Fear of People with Mental Health Problems**
- **Lack of Transportation**
- **Slow Processing at Housing Authority**



Accessing Section 8

Recognizing the high cost of rental housing in most rental markets, it often becomes essential to develop working collaborations with local housing authorities in order to facilitate the move into permanent housing for people who are **homeless**. Sometimes there are special “set asides” that can be developed (particularly for families and/or people with special needs). In some states, TANF-related subsidies can be utilized. It is vital to explore possibilities with housing authority administration and not to assume that it cannot be done.



Accessing Private Rental Housing

- **Know What You Are “Selling”**
- **Develop Relationships With Landlords**
- **Market To Whom?**
- **Warm Hits – Through Contacts**
- **Cold Calls And Community Searches**
- **Networking**
- **Follow-Up**



Accessing Private Rental Housing

- **Know What You are “Selling”**
 - ✓ Marketing Materials
 - ✓ Benefits to owners
 - ✓ Name recognition
- **Market to Whom?**
 - ✓ Brainstorm lists of possible resources
 - ✓ Ask resource people to brainstorm lists of possible leads
 - ✓ Identify how to respond to leads



Accessing Private Rental Housing

- **Warm Hits**

- ✓ Previous owners/management companies
- ✓ Friend/Associate of...
- ✓ Owners with history of philanthropy, personal experience/knowledge

- **Cold Calls & Community Searches**

- ✓ Neighborhood searches
- ✓ Door to door
- ✓ Internet listings
- ✓ Housing boards



Accessing Private Rental Housing

- **Networking**
 - ✓ Associations
 - ✓ Presentations
 - ✓ Informal opportunities
- **Follow-Up**
 - ✓ Follow up with current owners
 - ✓ Go the EXTRA MILE



Alternative Housing Resources

- Churches, Synagogues
- Large Corporations, Hospitals
- Government Agencies (CRAs, Housing, Rent Control)
- Banks and Mortgage Companies
- Professionals, Friends & Relatives
- Store Fronts and Bulletin Boards
- Faith Organizations
- Colleges & Universities
- Private Housing Developers



Housing Relocation Plan

A Housing Specialist helps the client to identify and off-set (as much as possible) barriers to securing housing.

The Housing Specialist also works with the client to identify appropriate, and reasonable, housing search goals.



Client Housing Assistance

- **Landlord/tenant education**
- **Advocacy for housing subsidies**
- **Transportation and coaching to meet potential property owners**
- **Referral to specific owners willing to rent to homeless families**
- **Assistance in overcoming bad credit, no credit, or eviction histories etc.**
- **Assistance in obtaining move-in funds**
- **Follow up to insure stable relationship with property owner.**



Tenant Responsibilities Curriculum

- Identifying housing that is suitable for your family.
- Understanding your rental agreement, and when, where, how and to whom you pay your rent
- How to be a good neighbor
- Money management
- Maintaining your home on a budget
- Identifying a maintenance problem and what to do about it
- How to communicate with a “problem” landlord
- Housing and sexual harassment
- Getting involved in your community



Notes:

Home-Based Case Management



PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF CASE MANAGEMENT

- ✓ **Assessment**
- ✓ **Planning**
- ✓ **Linking**
- ✓ **Monitoring**
- ✓ **Advocacy**

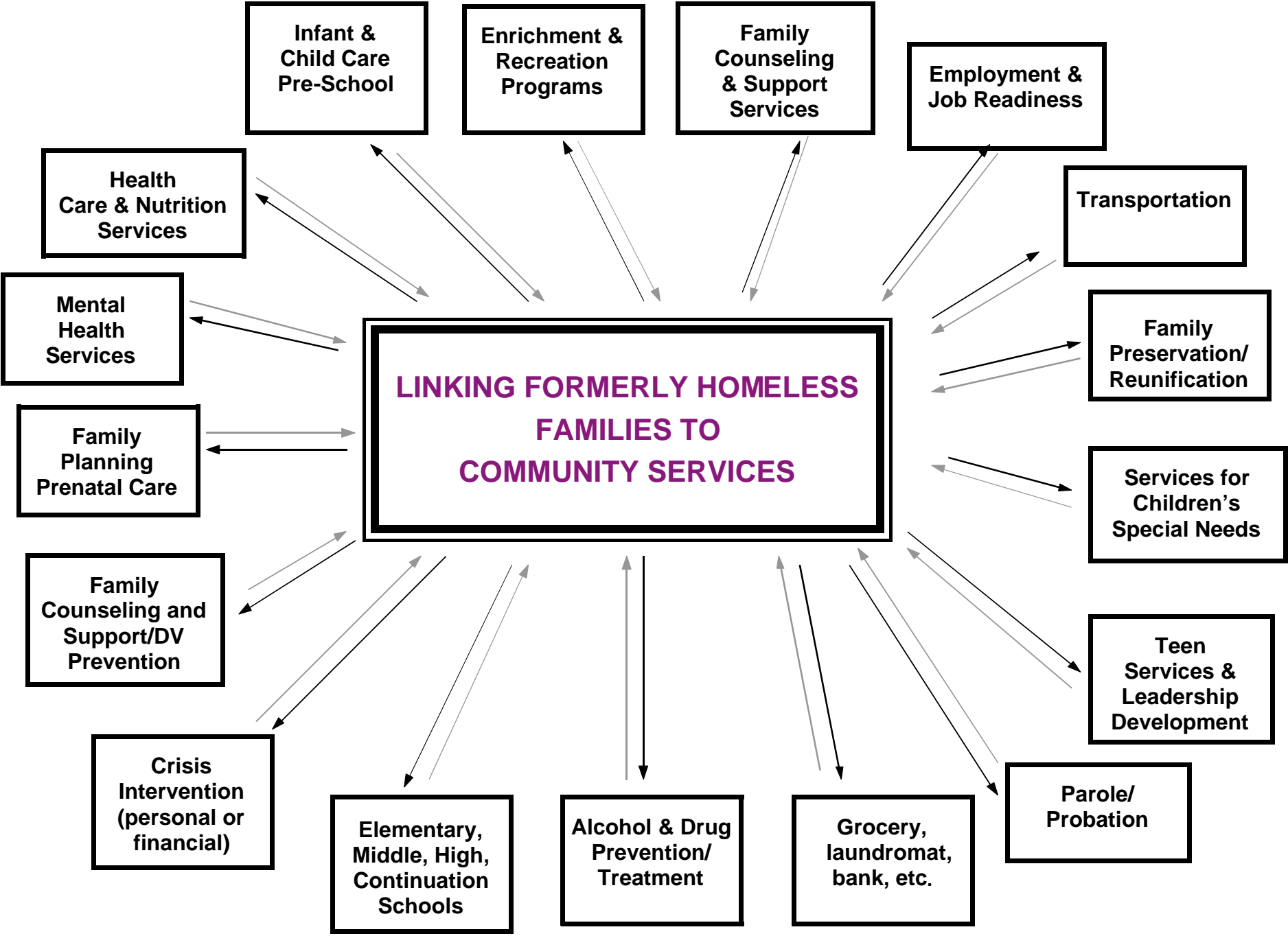


- **The primary functions of home based case management are to provide assistance to families in life skills development and to link families to other community organizations that provide services which they need.**
- **When services are not available, the housing first provider delivers the service themselves or advocates for another way of meeting the family's needs.**
- **The case manager provides the core level of services and refers specialized services to “mainstream” programs in the community (ie substance abuse services, child care).**



- **Some clients require more intensive home visits that include demonstrations of house-keeping skills, money-management and budgeting, development of grocery lists, parenting support.**
- **Others need only assistance in identifying resources in the community and monitoring/support to insure that they do not loose their housing if a crisis occurs.**





Notes:

The First 3 Months

Once housed, families may experience:

- **Loss of income**
- **Substance abuse relapse**
- **Increase in a child's behavioral problems**
- **High phone bill**
- **New relationship**
- **Expensive purchase**
- **Friend seeking to stay with them**
- **Unexpected depression**



Examples of Services by Case Managers

- Household management
- Money management
- Problem solving/survival skills
- Advocacy with welfare, CPS, legal, etc.
- Family and individual counseling
- Parenting education and support
- Relapse prevention
- Crisis intervention



~~Expected Outcome:~~

**Family Integrated into
Community,
Attaining Improved
Social and Economic Well-Being**



Outcome Evaluation

Short-Term Outcomes – Mothers

- **Movement from homelessness to temporary or permanent housing**
- **Decrease in psychological distress**
- **Decrease in substance use/abuse**
- **Participation in treatment, support, and training programs**



Outcome Evaluation

Short-Term Outcomes – Children

- **Regular school attendance**
- **Improved health assessment/care**
- **Reduction of behavioral/school problems**



Outcome Evaluation

Intermediate Outcomes – Mothers

- Increased residential stability
- Continued improvement in psychological functioning and reduction in symptoms and symptoms of distress
- Continued reduction in substance use/abuse
- Increase self-esteem and feelings of empowerment
- Improved life management skills including job/vocational skills and goal setting
- Participation in family planning



Outcome Evaluation

Intermediate Outcomes – Children

- Continued reduction in behavioral and school problems
- Improved school performance and regular school attendance
- Regular health check-ups, inoculations, & improved health status



Outcome Evaluation

Long-term Outcomes

- **Achieve residential stability**
- **Psychiatric stability**
- **Abstinence/continued reduction in substance use/abuse**
- **Competency in life management**
- **Employment or engagement in productive activity**
- **Stability as a family unit**
- **Continued engagement in family planning**

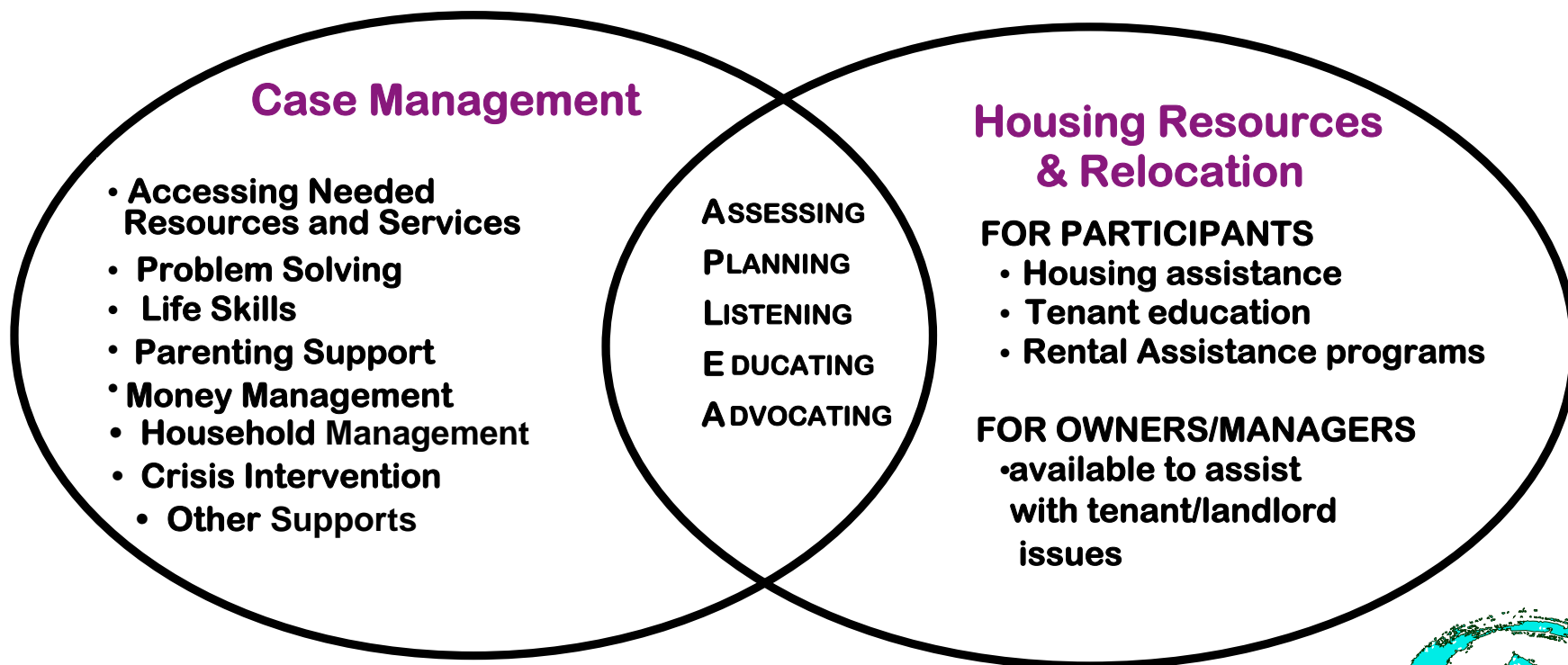


Adaptations

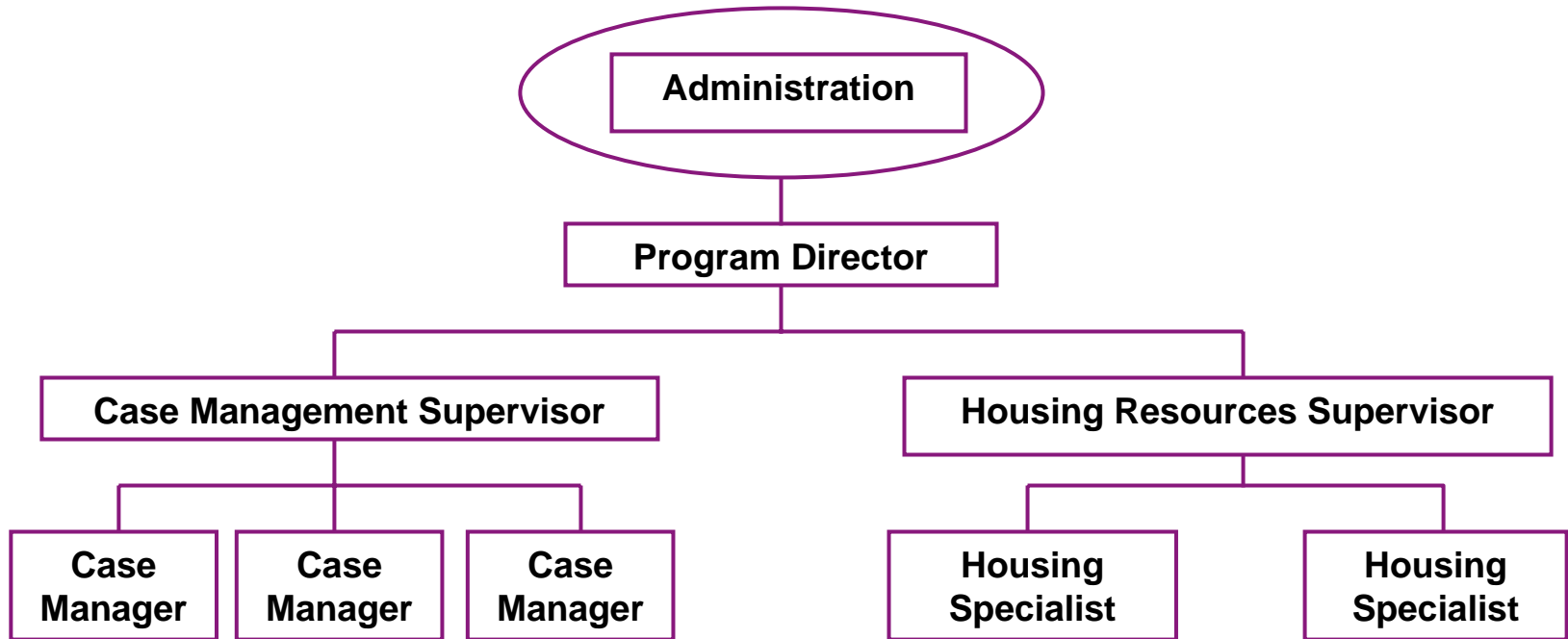
- In order to implement the *housing first* approach to ending homelessness, each community will need to assess its existing resources.
- A housing first approach can be implemented by one agency or it can be accomplished through the collaboration of agencies each providing specialized services.



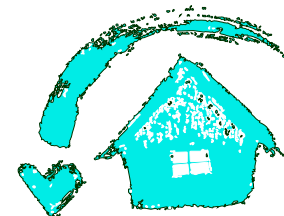
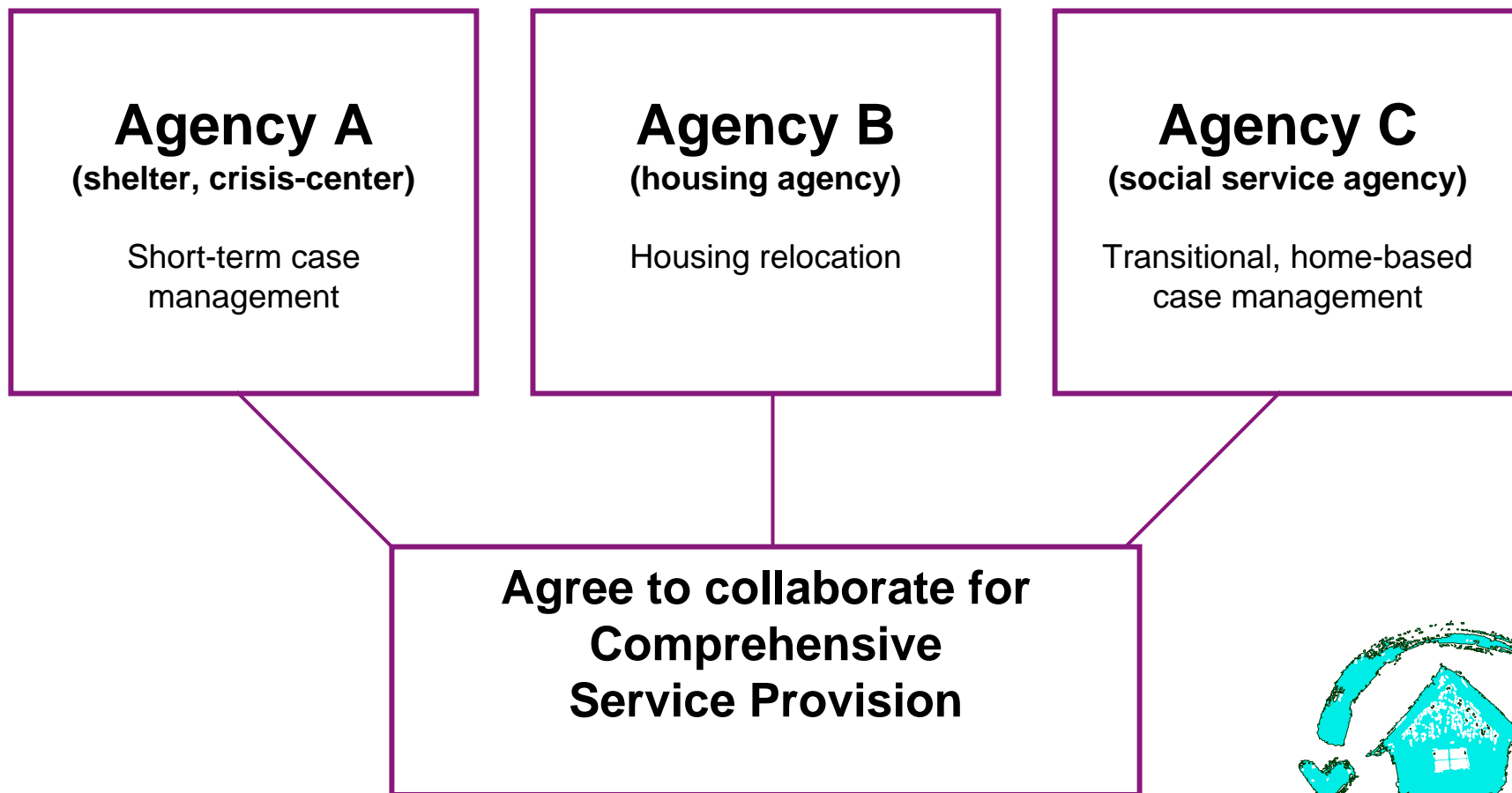
Housing First: Distinct Functions Serve Different Participant Needs



Basic Model



Collaborative Model



Community Level Questions



- Which families experiencing homelessness should be targeted for housing first services?
- Who will be responsible for the referral and assessment of families?
- Who can provide families with housing assistance, including:
 - Help overcoming personal barriers to accessing affordable housing
 - Locating subsidized or affordable units
 - Developing greater affordable housing resources
 - Serving as a resource to landlords

Community Level Questions

- **Who will provide the case management services to the family, including:**
 - Time-limited case management immediately after the move.
 - Linking individual/family with community supports.
 - Helping to resolve crises that may evolve following a housing placement.
- **What funding resources are available?**
- **What outcome data elements should be captured?**



Revisioning the System

- What are we doing wrong and how can we do better?
- Mainstream programs – How can they become more responsive to the needs of homeless and formerly homeless people?
- What role should the homeless service system play?
- Planning for outcomes? What should they be?
- Preventing homelessness - early intervention for families at risk of homelessness.
- Develop new affordable housing and subsidize existing housing.



Notes: